

Rurouni Kenshin



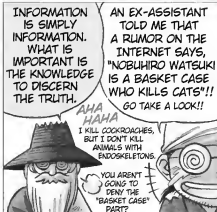
SHONEN JUMP MANGA

Story & Art by

Nobuhiro Watsuki

volume

24



和月伸宏

NOBUHIRO WATSUKI



THE INTERNET

I KNOW I'M A BIT BEHIND, BUT I'VE RECENTLY STARTED GOING ONLINE. I ONLY VISIT SITES OPERATED BY FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES, OR LOOK UP THINGS I AM CURIOUS ABOUT, AND IT IS ALL VERY FUN AND CONVENIENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SITUATIONS LIKE THE ONE ON THE LEFT, SO I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.

ONCE I HAVE MORE TIME, I WILL TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE OF POSTING THINGS AND DOING SOME INTERNET SHOPPING. BUT FIRST I MUST GET USED TO THE KEYBOARD...

BY THE WAY, WHAT IS *HENKAN* (CONVERT)? WHAT'S *HANKAKU MOJI* (HALF-WIDTH CHARACTERS)? THESE ARE BOTH KEYS ON A JAPANESE KEYBOARD, AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY DO.

Rurouni Kenshin, which has found fans not only in Japan but around the world, first made its appearance in 1992, as an original short story in *Weekly Shonen Jump Special*. Later rewritten and published as a regular, continuing *Jump* series in 1994, *Rurouni Kenshin* ended serialization in 1999 but continued in popularity, as evidenced by the 2000 publication of *Yahiko no Sakabatô* ("Yahiko's Reversed-Edge Sword") in *Weekly Shonen Jump*. His most current work, *Buso Renkin* ("Armored Alchemist"), began publication in June 2003, also in *Jump*.

RUROUNI KENSHIN
VOL. 24: THE END OF DREAMS
The SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition

STORY AND ART BY
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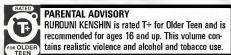
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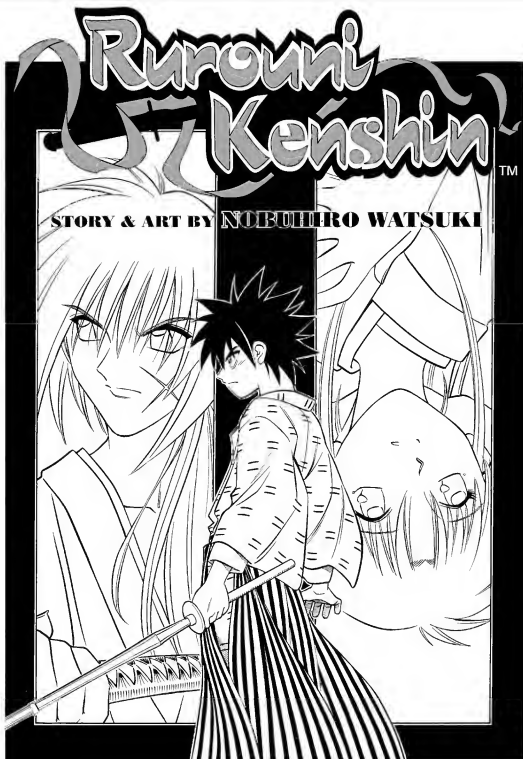
SHONEN JUMP Manga Edition
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SHONEN JUMP MANGA



MEIJI SWORDSMAN ROMANTIC STORY
Vol. 24: THE END OF DREAMS

Once he was *hitokiri*, an assassin, called Battōsai. His name was legend among the pro-Imperialist or "patriot" warriors who launched the Meiji Era. Now, Himura Kenshin is *saitōrō*, a wanderer, and carries a reversed-edge *sakabatō* blade, vowing to never kill another soul.



Saitō Hajime



Shinomori Aoshi

THUS FAR

Kenshin and his friends return to Tokyo after a deadly battle to defeat Shishio Makoto and his ambitions of conquering Japan. However, their peace is short-lived as those with grudges against Battōsai gather for revenge, attacking Akahiko, Matsuura Dojo, and police chief Uramura's house. To make matters worse, Kenshin finds out that the mastermind of this new attack is Enishi, the brother of Kenshin's deceased wife Tomoe—who died at Kenshin's own hand. Enishi confronts Kenshin and declares that he will lead an assault on Kamiya Dojo in ten days. Kenshin decides that although he can never fully atone for the crimes of his past, he will fight to protect the present, and begins by telling his friends his history.

Ten days later, Kenshin and his crew appear midair above the Kamiya dojo in hot air balloons. Kenshin and Sanosuke defeat Kujiranami with a well-timed combination of offense and defense. Inui, Otowa, and Gein are defeated respectively by Kenshin, Sanosuke, and Yahiko. Yatsune, their fifth enemy, is defeated by Saitō.

Then, the duel to settle the personal battle between Kenshin and Enishi begins. Against Kenshin's Hiten Mitsurugi-ryū, Enishi wields a *wazō*, a Japanese sword from the continent, and uses *Watōjutsu*, its unique sword style. Perhaps due to "sin" being overcome by "judgment," Enishi withstands Kenshin's *Anakaken Ryū no Hirameki* and wins the fight. However, Enishi's true intent is not to kill Kenshin, but to take away the thing Kenshin cares for the most. Kujiranami regains consciousness and holds Kenshin back as Enishi's crazed sword draws closer to Kaoru in the smoke created by Gein!

明神 神彦



Myōjin Yahiko

相楽 左之助



Sagara Sanosuke

高荷 恵



Takani Megumi

外 印



Gein

緋村 剣心 (人斬り 抜刀斎)



Himura Kenshin (Hitokiri Battōsai)

神谷 薫



Kamiya Kaoru

雪代 縁



Yukishiro Enishi



C

A

S

T



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Act 207—Plunge into Darkness



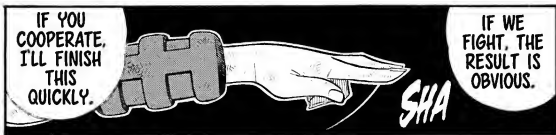
YOU
WILL BE
SACRIFICED
HERE.

I HAVE
NOTHING
PERSONAL
AGAINST YOU,
BUT YOU'RE
NECESSARY FOR
CASTING THE
JINCHŪ ON
HIM.



Act 207
**Plunge
into
Darkness**





AS
LONG AS
KENSIN
DOESN'T
GIVE UP...

...I
WILL
NEVER
GIVE UP!!



THIS
WILL BE
A BIT
ROUGH,
SO BEAR
WITH ME.

FASH

THEN
I HAVE
NO
CHOICE.

I
SEE.



KEN—

!!!

GIVE
UP.

—SHIN...

SHAAAK

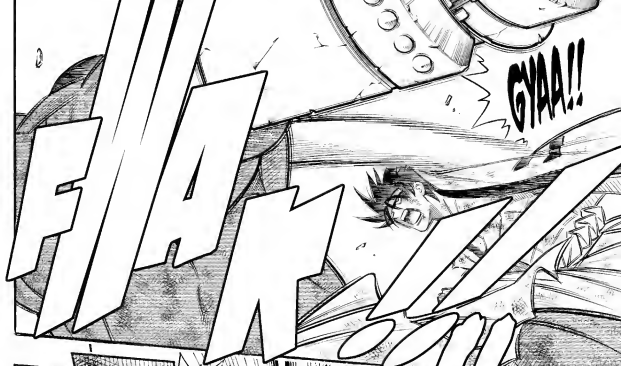




BATTŌ-
SIII!

HOLD
IT RIGHT
THERE!!







KENSHIN,
THE WHITE-
HAIR—

HMPH.

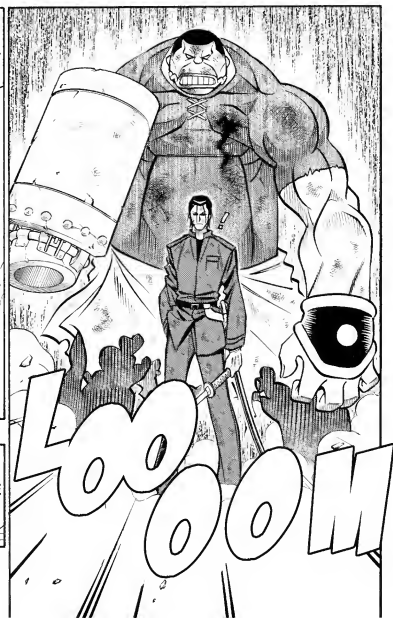


I
SEE...

THIS
GUY IS
MIND
OVER
BODY.



OF
COURSE
...









THIS
SCENT
IS A
TRAIL.

FOLLOW
IT
CARE-
FULLY.

WHAT
DID YOU
DO TO
KAORU-
DONO?!

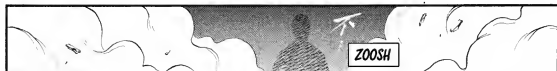
ENISHI
!

KAA



THE
"ANSWER"
YOU HAVE
BEEN
LOOKING
FOR...

...IS
THERE.



ZOOSH



AHH!

TAKE
A GOOD
LOOK!



HAA
 KAORU-DONO!!
 HAA
 HAA

KAORU-DONO!!

H A A

KAORU-DONO!

H A A





KEN...









Rurouni Kenshin

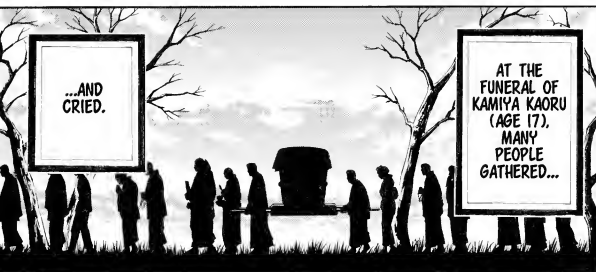


Act 208—The End of Dreams

...WHEN
THEY
DIE.

...IS SAID TO BE
DETERMINED BY THE
NUMBER OF PEOPLE
CRYING...

THE
VALUE
OF A
PERSON...



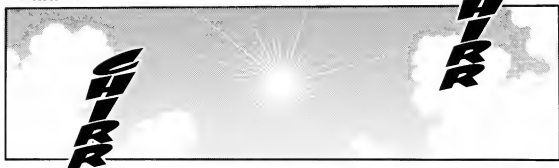
...IN THE
FUNERAL
PROCESSION.



HOWEVER,
HIMURA
KENSIN
WAS NOT
SEEN...

Act 208—The End of Dreams





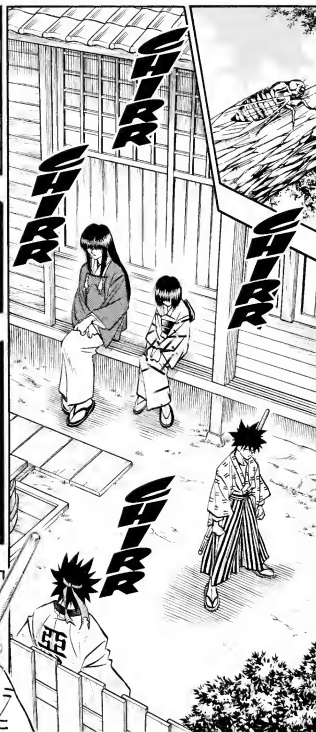
WHY...?



HOW
DID IT
TURN
OUT THIS
WAY...?



WHEN I
WOKE UP...



...NEVER
SAW HOW
KAORU
DIED.

SO I...

...I WAS
IN BED
AT THE
OGUNI
CLINIC.

WHEN I
WOKE UP,
AFTER
EVERYTHING
WAS OVER...

...HER
BODY
PREPARED
AND
DRESSED
IN
WHITE—

WHAT
I SAW
WAS...

...THE FACT
THAT KAORU
DIED DOESN'T
FEEL REAL...

THAT'S
WHY, EVEN
AFTER HER
FUNERAL...

SHE
WAS LIKE
ANOTHER
PERSON.

SANOSUKE'S
FOLLOWERS
ARE TRYING
THEIR HARDEST
TO LOCATE HIM,
BUT HE'S STILL
MISSING...

AND KENSHIN...
THEY TOLD ME
THAT KENSHIN
DISAPPEARED
WHILE NOBODY
WAS LOOKING.

THERE'S
NOWHERE
ELSE FOR
HIM TO
RETURN
BUT HERE...

WHERE
DID HE
GO...?



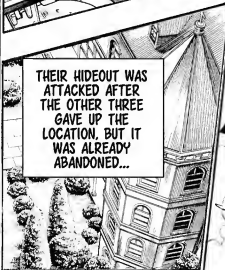
CLENCH

IN THE END,
EVERYTHING
HAPPENED WHILE
I WAS TAKING
MY SWEET
TIME BEING
UNCONSCIOUS...

KUJIRANAMI,
WHO WAS
DEFEATED BY
SAITÔ, IS HALF
CRAZED AND
UNABLE TO
COMMUNICATE.

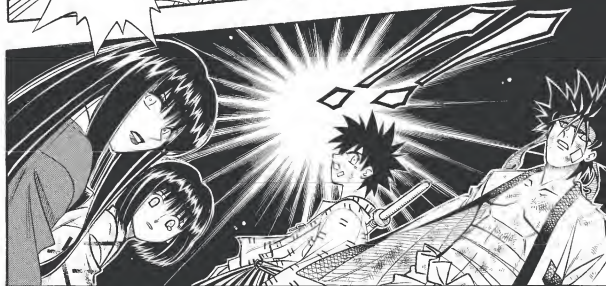


THEIR HIDEOUT WAS
ATTACKED AFTER
THE OTHER THREE
GAVE UP THE
LOCATION, BUT IT
WAS ALREADY
ABANDONED...



THE MAN WHO
KILLED KAORU,
YUKISHIRO ENISHI,
FLED INTO THE
SMOKE ALONG
WITH HIS
COMRADE GEIN—







FROM THE
BAKUMATSU TO
THE MEIJI...
THE CHANGE IN
ERAS BRINGS
CHANGES TO
PEOPLE'S
LIVES.

NOT
EVERYONE IS
WELCOMED
BY THE
NEW ERA.

...AND
THOSE WHO
ABANDONED
THE ERA...

THOSE
ABANDONED
BY THE
ERA...

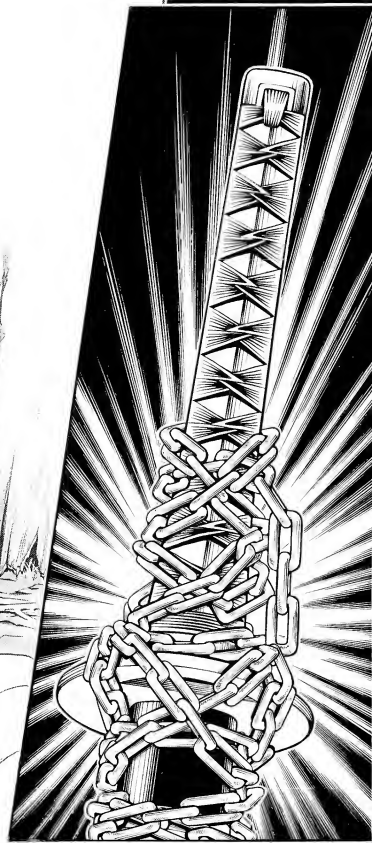
THEY
EVENTUALLY
GATHER AND
JOIN TO
FORM...

PUSHED
AWAY BY
SOCIETY, AND
DISLIKED BY
THE PUBLIC...

SIGN: FALLEN VILLAGE

THIS IS
THE FINAL
DESTINY FOR
THOSE WHO
HAVE GIVEN
UP ON
THEIR LIVES.

...AN
OUTCAST
COMMUNITY,
A "FALLEN
VILLAGE."







WE'LL
AVENGE
KAORU!

YEA

WE'RE
GONNA
GO KILL
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI!

WE
CAN'T
JUST
BACK
DOWN!

THIS
CAN'T
BE THE
END!!!

IT WON'T
BRING HER
BACK...

BUT...



GRAB

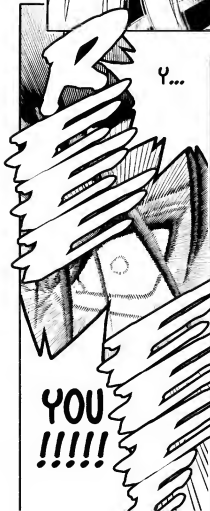
WHY DON'T
YOU SAY
SOME-
THING!

KENSHIN!!!



...MORE...

NO...



Y...

T00...

...TIRED...



SANO-
SUKE
?!



MORON
!!!





EVERYONE
WENT HOME
ALONE THAT
DAY...

NOBODY...WAS
ABLE TO SAY
EVEN A WORD
AFTER THAT...



...AND MY
DREAMS
BEGAN...

SINCE
THAT DAY,
KENSHIN
AND KAORU
HAVE ALWAYS
BEEN
THERE...

...THAT
I MET
KENSHIN
AND KAORU
FOR THE
FIRST
TIME...

IT WAS
ON THIS
BRIDGE,
ON A
COLD
WINTER
DAY...

BUT...NOW...





WHAT'S
THE MATTER?
DID
SOMETHING
HAPPEN?!



YAHIKO?



WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
OUT
HERE?

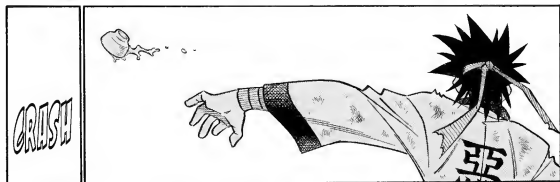


TP

I
THOUGHT
IT WAS
YOU.

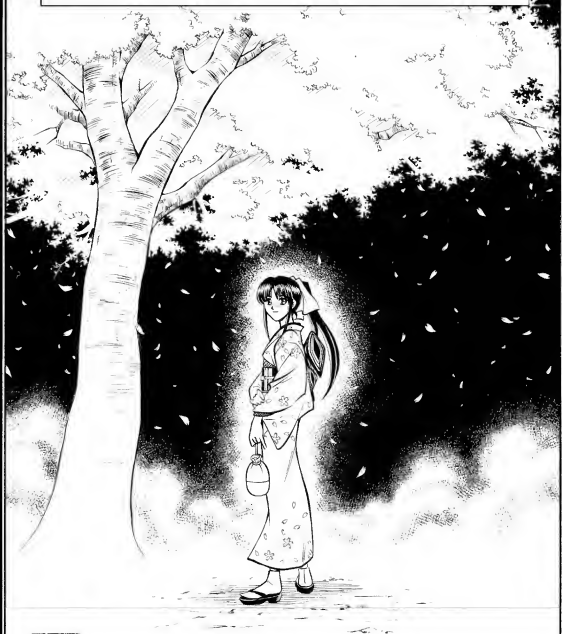
Rurouni Kenshin





Act 209—See Ya

Act 209—See Ya



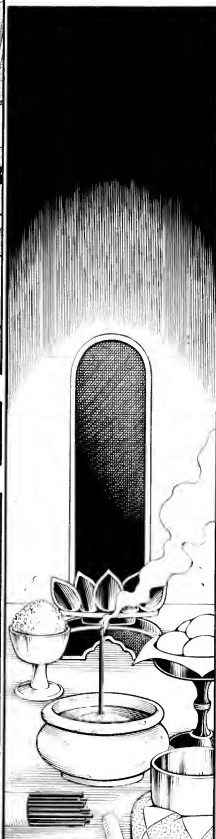


...NO.



IT'S
NOT A
LIE.

THAT'S
KAORU.



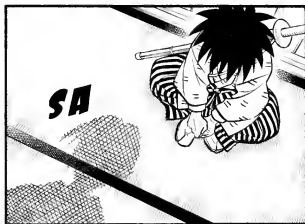
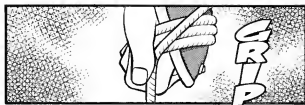
IT'S
ALL TOO
LATE.



...AND
KENSIN
IS
BROKEN...



KAORU WAS
MURDERED...



...



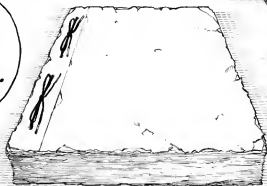
AND
IN THE
END...
...I
COULDN'T
DO
ANYTHING
...





THE
DIARY OF
HIMURA'S
DEAD WIFE...

...WITH
HER TRUE
FEELINGS
WRITTEN
IN IT...



THIS
IS WHAT
KAORU
ASKED ME
TO BRING.



THEN WE'LL
MAKE HIM
BOW DOWN SO HARD
IN APOLOGY AT
KAORU-SAN'S GRAVE.
HE'LL BURY
HIS FACE
IN DIRT!

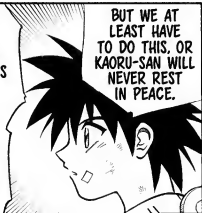


WE'LL PRY
OPEN THAT
WHITE-HAIRED
MAN'S EYES AND
SHOW HIM THIS.
TO SLAP HIM IN
THE FACE WITH
HIS STUPIDITY
AND THE SENSE-
LESSNESS OF
WHAT HE'S
DONE.



AND THIS
IS A TASK
FOR YOU,
KAORU-SAN'S
FIRST STUDENT...

...AND
ONE WHOSE
POTENTIAL
HIMURA
SAW!!



BUT WE AT
LEAST HAVE
TO DO THIS, OR
KAORU-SAN WILL
NEVER REST
IN PEACE.

...BUT THAT
WOULD
STRAY FROM
KAORU-SAN'S
KAMIYA
KASSHIN-
RYU...

...AND GO
AGAINST
HIMURA'S
VOW.



ORDINARILY,
I WOULD WANT
TO TAKE HIS
HEAD AND USE
IT AS AN
OFFERING...

WHAT!

ENERGY
IS MY
STRONG
POINT—
♡

OR
RATHER,
YOUR ONLY
STRONG
POINT.

...SUCH
AN
UPBEAT
PERSON.

NOTHING...
I JUST
THOUGHT...
YOU'RE
ALWAYS..

I'LL HELP
TOO, SO LET'S
FIRST FIND
THE WHITE-
HAIRD—

WHAT?

WELL.

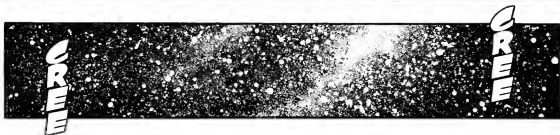
WE CAN'T
LET HIM
GET AWAY
WITH THIS!!

BUT IT'S
JUST LIKE
YOU SAID!

...AND
SEARCH
FOR
WHITE
HAIR!

ALL RIGHT,
WE'LL HEAD OVER
TO KENSHIN FIRST
THING IN THE
MORNING,
ALONG WITH
SANOSUKE...



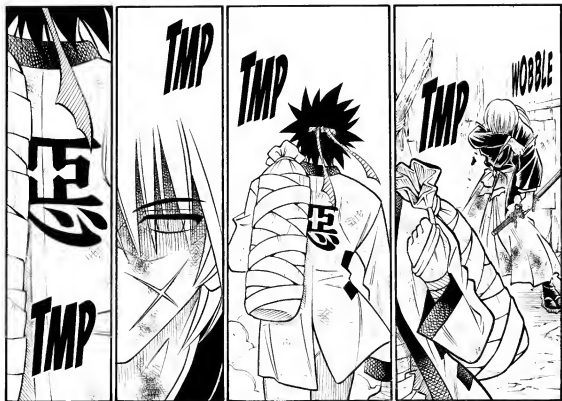






SEE
YA.





KINDA MM—
LIKE THAT.
DON'T
WORRY
ABOUT
IT.

CHIRP
CHIRP

YOUR
EYES ARE
RED. DIDN'T
GET MUCH
SLEEP?



...WHEN
HE'S
ALIVE,
BUT DEAD
INSIDE.

SEEING
HIM IS
A WASTE
OF TIME...



IF YOU
STAY AT
THE DOJO,
YOU'LL
END UP
BROKEN.

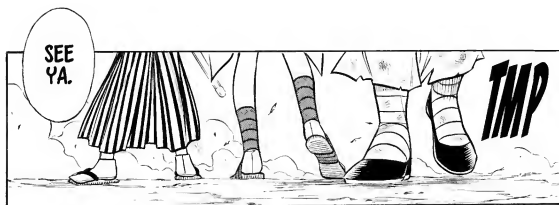
I'M
GIVING IT
TO YOU,
SO HURRY
UP AND
MOVE.

I LEFT
MY ROOM
IN THE
GOROTSUKI
LONG
HOUSE.

SANOSUKE
...?!

SHA

FWIP



I WON'T
LET IT
END LIKE
THIS!!

IT'S NOT
THE END
YET...
NO!!



SO...

...BUT
MAKE SURE
YOU COME
BACK TO
WITNESS
THE END!!

I DON'T
KNOW WHERE
YOU'RE
GOING...

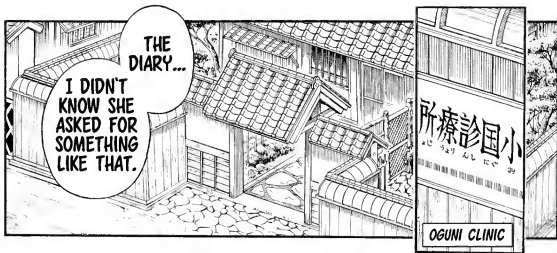
THERE'S NO NEED
FOR ME TO ACT
ENERGETIC TO KEEP
YOUR SPIRIT UP.

ANY-
WAY...

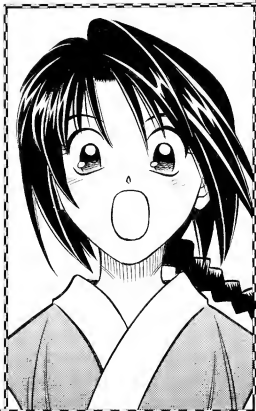
HIMURA
SURE SAW
SOMETHING
IN HIM.

SO IT
REALLY
DON'T
BECOME
TOO
LATE.

LET'S
GO SEE
HIMURA!



Rurouni Kenshin





Act 210—Geezer—Identity Unknown



Act 210
**Geezer—Identity
Unknown**





WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU CAN'T RUIN WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE.



YEAH! YOU REJECTS!

SHAKE SHAKE

WE'LL RUIN OUR GOOD NAMES IF WE KEEP LETTING OUTSIDERS COME AND GO.



WE WON'T LET YOU GET PAST US!!



THROW
THEM
OUT!!

DON'T
GO EASY,
EVEN IF
THEY ARE
KIDS!!

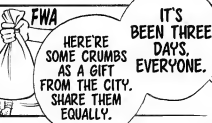
I SAID,
DON'T
ORDER ME
AROUND!!

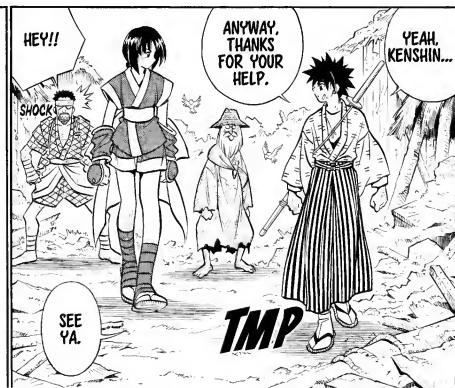
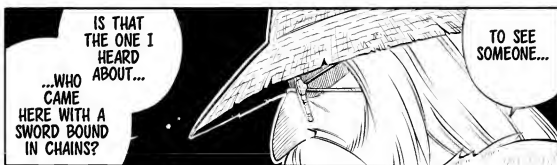
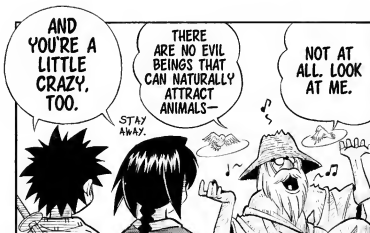
LET'S GO,
MISAO!!



NO YOU
WON'T!!







I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

...

THAT'S ALL...

MY STORY IS PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS EVERYONE ELSE'S WHO WAS THERE.

ANY PHYSICAL EVIDENCE?

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

HUH?

...BUT THE THING THAT SANOSUKE PICKED UP A LONG TIME AGO IS IN THE DOJO'S STORAGE...

OH! IT'S NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THIS...
THE POLICE COLLECTED ALL THE EVIDENCE—

I'LL COME WITH YOU, IF YOU'RE GOING BACK TO THE DOJO.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE KEY TO THE STORAGE HOUSE IS.

RIGHT... I'M LEAVING NOW.

KA CHAN

NO
MORE.

...

LET
THIS
ONE
SLEEP—

TOO
TIRED.



...HERE
AGAIN...



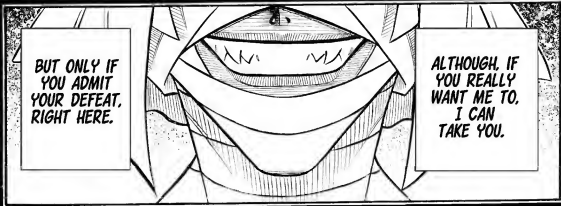
NONE OF
YOUR CRAZY
TALK. WHY
WOULD
I TAKE
YOU?

I JUST
CAME TO
LAUGH
AT YOU,
FOR
SPITE.

...HOW IRONIC
THAT YOU
ARE THIS
ONE'S GUIDE...
IT DOESN'T
MATTER.
LET'S GO.



WHAT'S
THE
MATTER?
HOW
PATHETIC.



BUT ONLY IF
YOU ADMIT
YOUR DEFEAT,
RIGHT HERE.

ALTHOUGH, IF
YOU REALLY
WANT ME TO,
I CAN
TAKE YOU.

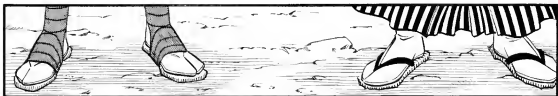


...A HUGE
MISTAKE
YOU CAN'T
TAKE BACK...

IF YOU
ADMIT THAT
YOUR SWORD,
YOUR LIFE,
AND YOUR
PHILOSOPHY
ARE ALL...



— MURA!!



WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE?

WHAT
...

CLENCH

HIMURA...





GET UP,
HIMURA!



HIMURA!

LET'S GO
AVENGE
KAORU-SAN'S
DEATH!!



SUMP



YOU
DON'T
HAVE TO
MOVE.
JUST
LISTEN.
I'M
GOING
TO FIND
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI.

AND I'LL
MAKE HIM
PAY FOR
MURDERING
KAORU.



TMP



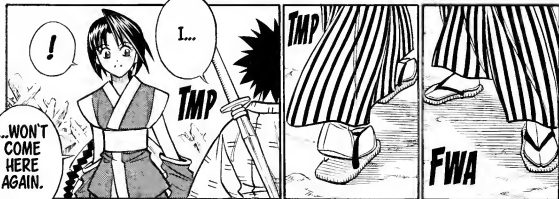
I WILL NEVER LOOK BACK. I'LL JUST KEEP LOOKING AHEAD.

BUT I WON'T FALTER.

I WON'T LOSE MY WAY.

...AND WIELD MY SWORD FOR THE WEAK AND ABUSED WHO REFLECT IN MY EYES, JUST AS YOU'VE BEEN DOING UP TO NOW.

AND AS YOU SAID BEFORE, I WILL BECOME STRONG WITH KAMIYA KASSHIN-RYU...

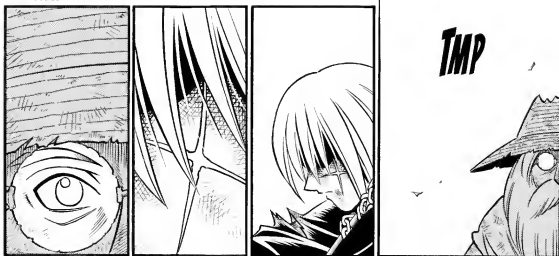


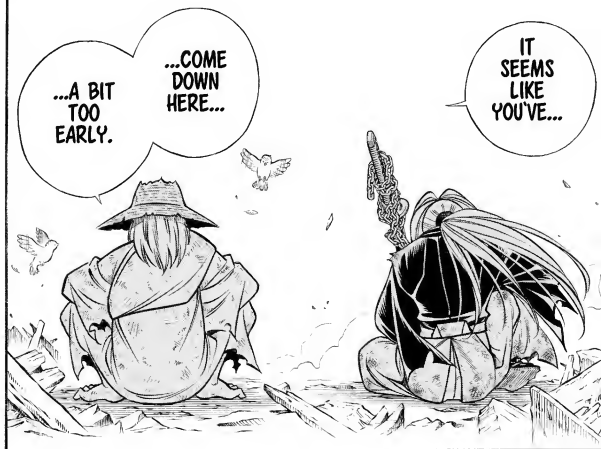


...AT THE
KAMIYA
DOJO!

I'LL BE
WAITING
FOR
YOU...









WHAT?
WHAT'S
GOING
ON?

DO YOU
KNOW WHAT
YOU ARE
SAYING?

WHAT
ARE YOU
THINKING
?!

MEGUMI
!

WE WILL
EXHUME
KAORU'S
BODY—

TONIGHT.

THIS GUY,
OF ALL THE
THINGS HE
COULD SAY—

LISTEN
TO
THIS!



SHUT UP.
"THIS GUY" IS
APPROPRIATE
FOR THIS
GUY!

DON'T CALL
AOSHI-
SAMA
"THIS
GUY"!

SO
WHAT'S
GOING
ON?

YOU
COME
AND
HELP
TOO.



Rurouni Kenshin



Act 211—It's Not Impossible

WE WILL
EXHUME
KAORU'S
BODY—

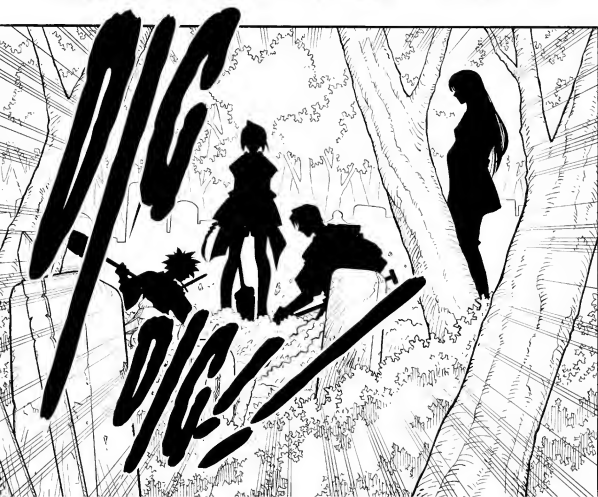
TONIGHT...

DIG

SCRAPE

SCRAPE

DIG



Act 211—It's Not Impossible





THERE IS NO WHAT OR WHY.

IT IS THE MOST DIRECT WAY OF EXAMINING HER BODY.

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?!

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

EXHUME KAORU'S BODY?!

THUD

DIDN'T YOU FEEL THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG?

YOU WEREN'T THERE TO SEE KAORU'S DEATH. AND WERE ONLY TOLD ABOUT IT LATER.

EXAMINE ...

CRAB

LISTEN.

THE
MURDER OF
KAMIYA KAORU WAS
THE GRAND FINALE,
AND THE MOST
IMPORTANT PART
OF THE PLAN.

STARTING
WITH THE CANNON
FIRE AT AKABEKO,
THE JINCHŪ INCIDENT
WAS CARRIED OUT
MALICIOUSLY AND
METICULOUSLY...



THE STEP
LEADING
THERE,
THE
"MURDER,"
IS
MISSING.

AT THIS
IMPOR-
TANT
POINT,
THE
RESULTING
"DEATH"
WAS
ALL
THAT
WAS
LEFT
FOR
PEOPLE
TO SEE.



BUT IN THE
END, HE
COMPLETED
THE JINCHŪ BY
NOT ALLOWING
BATTŌSAI, OR
ANYONE ELSE,
TO WITNESS
THIS MOMENT...

KAORU'S
MOMENT OF
DEATH—
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI KNEW
VERY WELL
THE EFFECT
THIS WOULD
HAVE ON
BATTŌSAI.





...BUT
CONSIDERING
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI'S
PAINSTAKING
PREPARATIONS...

IT IS NOT
UNREASONABLE TO
ASSUME THAT HE
HAD TO CHANGE
HIS PLANS DUE
TO BATTŌSAI'S
UNEXPECTED FLOW
OF ENERGY...

...IT
DOESN'T
MAKE
SENSE.





HE MUST HAVE
STOLEN BODIES FROM
THE GRAVEYARD AND
USED THEIR PARTS.

I TOOK A LOOK
EARLIER, AND IT
HAS HUMAN SKIN,
BONES, AND FAT
INCORPORATED INTO
ITS CONSTRUCTION.

...TO
READ WHEN
I BECAME
THE NEW
LEADER.

I REMEMBER
A SECRET ART
WRITTEN ABOUT
IN THE BOOKS
LEFT FOR ME...

A DOLL
MADE OF
CORPSES...

THIS LED TO THE
SECRET DARK ART
OF PREPARING A
LIFELIKE DOLL OUT
OF CORPSES—

BUT
KAGEMUSHA
REQUIRED A
GREAT AMOUNT
OF MONEY AND
TIME TO TRAIN,
MAKING IT
DIFFICULT TO
RELY ON THEM.

IN THE CIVIL
WAR ERA, THE
WARLORDS
USED
KAGEMUSHA
AS PART OF
THEIR
PROTECTION.

HOW THE BLOOD FLOWED OUT OF HER WOUNDS AND THE WARMTH LEFT HER...

I WAS THE ONE WHO EXAMINED THE BODY!

THAT WAS NOT A DOLL!

TMP

SO IF THE MAN CALLED GEIN IS SOMEONE WHO HAS INHERITED THIS DARK ART...

STOP IT!!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT SECRET ARTS THERE MAY BE, BUT DON'T GET OUR HOPES UP WITH YOUR SUPPOSITIONS!!

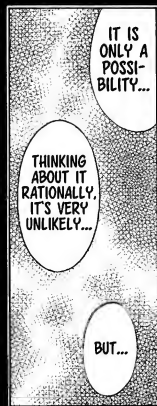
EVEN THOUGH A COLD PERSON LIKE YOU CAN'T TELL, WE ARE ALL DEVASTATED INSIDE!

YOU ARE SUCH A...

...

CAN YOU ABSOLUTELY SWEAR THAT YOU WERE COMPLETELY UNEMOTIONAL WHEN FACED WITH THE DEATH OF SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU?

CAN YOU ABSOLUTELY SWEAR IT?



...IT'S NOT
IMPOSSIBLE
!!



LET'S
OPEN
IT.

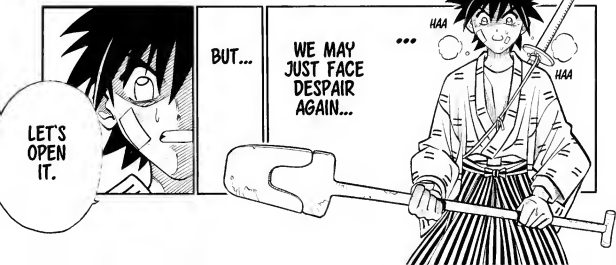
BUT...

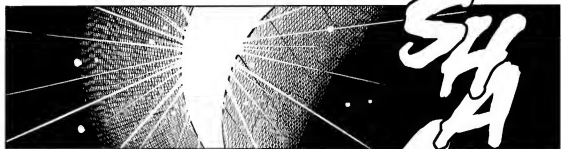
WE MAY
JUST FACE
DESPAIR
AGAIN...

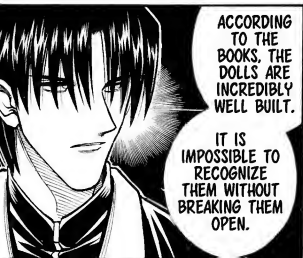
HAA

...

HAA







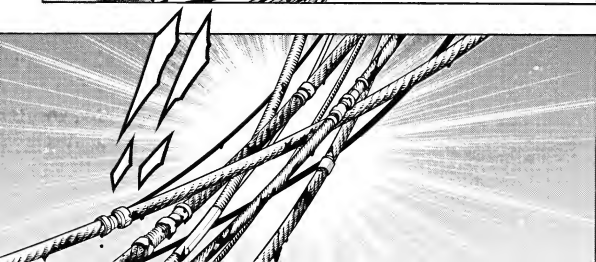
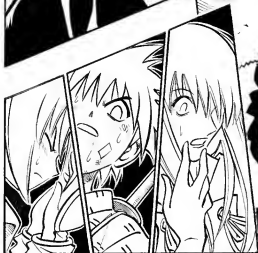


...IT'S NOT
IMPOSSIBLE.



BUT...





...THE
PROBABILITY
OF
POSSIBILITY.

GOOD
THING
WE BET
ON...

KACHANK

THERE IS NO WAY TO KNOW
WHY YUKISHIRO ENISHI USED
SUCH ELABORATE MEASURES
TO FAKE HER DEATH...

KAMIYA
KAORU HAS
NOT YET BEEN
MURDERED.

...BUT
THIS I CAN
SAY WITH
CERTAINTY—

KENSHIN! **KAORU**
IS ALIVE!

KAORU
IS
ALIVE.

KENSHIN
-!!

CHIRP
CHIRP



“FREE TALK” <PART I>

So there it is, Kaoru is alive. The chain of events of “Kaoru’s death→Kenshin breaks→Kaoru is really alive” got much praise and criticism, cheers and scoldings, and many comments. Of course, I was prepared for it, but I was not fully confident about it. In the whole history of writing *Ruro-Ken*, this was the point where I was the most worried about the readers’ reactions.

To be honest, if I had put the theme as my first priority, I should have killed Kaoru. The theme would be more apparent, and the story layout would be simplified, bringing a cleaner wrap-up to the plot. In truth, up until the *Jinchū* episodes, I was split 50/50 on whether or not to kill her, and was thinking so hard I got fevers from it.

But after finishing the Kyoto episode, I thought, “The basics of a shonen manga are smiles and a happy ending.” If Kaoru died, there would be no clear happy end, and so I chose this storyline.

I put in many hints, and gave away some more hints in the author’s comments when it was published in the magazine, to follow up on it as much as I could. The older, more perceptive readers may have caught it, but it may have been harsh for the younger readers, so I apologize.

I have heard of people quitting reading *Ruro-Ken* due to this storyline. With this story, I have finally broken the borders of historical fiction. However, the episode where it turns out Kaoru is alive had better reactions than the one where Kaoru died.

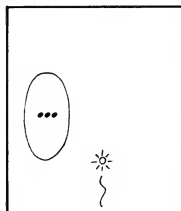
The basics of shonen manga are smiles and a happy ending. In order to keep this plot choice from being a mistake, I will tread carefully towards the climax of the *Jinchū* episode. Please accompany me, if you’d like.



Act 212
**Begin
Acting**

和伸
月宏





UM...
WHAT
HAPPENED
TO ME...?

IDIOT.
FIVE MORE
MINUTES?!

SPRING

HAA

HAA

SOMEHOW,
I'M IN A
BATHROBE...

I THOUGHT
I WOULD
CERTAINLY
BE KILLED...

THAT
MOMENT...

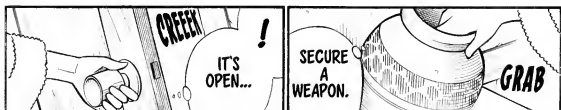
...I AM
CERTAIN
I HAVE
BEEN
KID-
NAPPED.

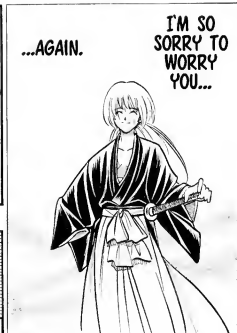
I DON'T
KNOW
HOW
MUCH
TIME HAS
PASSED
SINCE
THEN, BUT
IN THIS
SITUATION
...

ANYWAY...

GLARE

BUT I LOST
CONSCIOUSNESS
FROM WHATEVER
WAS ON THAT
CLOTH...









THE CLOSEST ISLAND
IS 20 KILOMETERS*
AWAY, AND THESE
WATERS ARE INFESTED
WITH SHARKS.



THIS IS AN ISOLATED
ISLAND THAT THE
ORGANIZATION USES
AS A WAYPOINT FOR
TRANSPORTING GOODS
TO TOKYO.

*APPROX. 12 MILES

OTHER
THAN THE RELAY
BOAT THAT ARRIVES
ONCE A WEEK, IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE FOR
PEOPLE TO GET
ON OR OFF
THIS ISLAND.
IT IS A
NATURAL
FORTRESS.

ZOOOSH

AND
EXCLUDING
THE BAY OUT
FRONT, THE
SURROUNDINGS
ARE ALL SHEER
CLIFFS.



...HOW
LONG IS
EVENTUALLY
?



AFTER
BATTŌSAI
ROTS TO
DEATH...

...



NOT
TOO
LONG.

HEH

WELL.



JUST
STAY
HERE
FOR A
WHILE.

I'LL
SEND YOU
BACK TO
TOKYO
EVENTUALLY.



I
THOUGHT...
THAT I WOULD
DEFINITELY
BE KILLED.

WHY
DIDN'T YOU
KILL ME?

ONE MORE
QUESTION.



SKRAW

SKRAW

ZOOSH

...



BUT...

I DON'T
GET
IT...



NO,
THAT'S
NOT
RIGHT.

...MERCY?

HE'S PROVEN
WITH THE
STORY HE
TOLD KENSHIN
THAT HE HAS
NO HEART.

...

THE JINCHŪ HAS
BEEN COMPLETED
IN SOME FORM...
AND SOMETHING IS
HAPPENING TO
KENSHIN.



FWN

IT'S
NOT
SOME-
THING...

...THAT
I HAVE
TO
EXPLAIN
TO YOU.

TMP

"IT'S NOT
SOMETHING
I HAVE
TO EXPLAIN
TO YOU."

TP

TP

IT
SURE
ISN'T
...

...SOME-
THING YOU
SHOULD
TELL
ANYONE
CASUALLY.

HEH
HEH

NOTHING
...

I WAS
GIVEN A
GREAT
CHANCE
TO TEST
MY SKILLS
BECAUSE
OF IT.

...WHAT
?

I HAVE
VERY, VERY
IMPORT-
ANT...

...BUSINESS
TO
ATTEND
TO.

I WILL
RETURN TO
TOKYO WITH
THE NEXT
RELAY SHIP.

CREEK

KENSHIN...

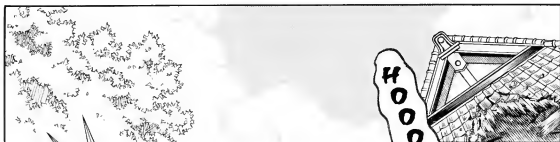
THIS IS
NOT GOOD...
I HAVE TO
ESCAPE
SOMEHOW!!

CLAK

HE NEEDS
TO BE
TAKEN CARE
OF BEFORE
HE DOES
ANYTHING
TO GIVE
US AWAY...

...WITH THE
JINCHŪ
COMPLETE,
I HAVE
NO USE
FOR HIM.

HMPH...





THESE ARE OF NO MORE USE!!

MONSTER BIRD KICK OF JOY!!

KAORU IS ALIVE!

HYAAA!

YOU BETTER CLEAN THAT UP.



THAT SORT OF UNORTHODOX STUFF IS THE EXPERTISE OF PEOPLE LIKE AOSHI.

MUNCH

MUNCH

EVEN THE BEST DOCTOR IN THE WORLD WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TELL.



LET'S GO LET HIMURA KNOW RIGHT AWAY!

THAT'S RIGHT. LET'S HURRY!

KYA!

KEN-SAN WILL BE HAPPIER KNOWING SHE IS ALIVE.

I'M ACTUALLY HAPPY.

HA HA, THANK YOU.

I'M NOT DIS-APPOINTED OR ANYTHING.

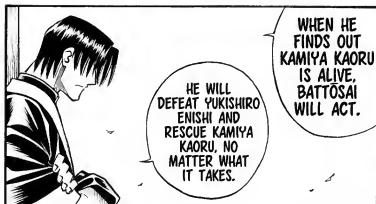


IT'S
TOO
SOON.

DON'T
DO IT.

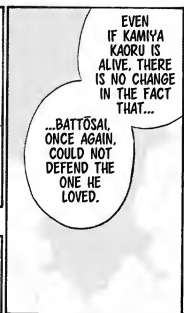


WHAT
?



HE WILL
DEFEAT YUKISHIRO
ENISHI AND
RESCUE KAMIYA
KAORU. NO
MATTER WHAT
IT TAKES.

WHEN HE
FINDS OUT
KAMIYA KAORU
IS ALIVE,
BATTŌSAI
WILL ACT.



EVEN
IF KAMIYA
KAORU IS
ALIVE, THERE
IS NO CHANGE
IN THE FACT
THAT...

...BATTŌSAI,
ONCE AGAIN,
COULD NOT
DEFEND THE
ONE HE
LOVED.



THAT
IS THE
END.

BUT...



HE WILL
BE NO
DIFFERENT
INSIDE
THAN HE
IS NOW.

THE
ONLY
DIFFERENCE
IS WHETHER
HE'S
SITTING OR
WALKING.



THE BOTTOM
LINE...HE
NEEDS TO FIND
HIS "ANSWER"...



THE "ANSWER"
TO PAYING
FOR HIS CRIMES
THAT HE HAS
BEEN SEARCHING
FOR THESE
PAST 15
YEARS...

UNLESS
HE FINDS
THAT...
...HIS
SOUL WILL
NEVER
INHABIT
HIS BODY
AGAIN.

HE WILL
ONCE
AGAIN
WANDER.

HE WILL
NEVER
RETURN
TO THE
DOJO.



HE WILL
BECOME AN
INHABITANT OF
HIS LONELY
TRAVELS AND
LIVE THE REST
OF HIS LIFE
WITHOUT INVOLVING
HIMSELF WITH
ANYONE ELSE.

THE ONE
WHO MUST
FIND THE
"ANSWER" IS
KENSHIN
HIMSELF...



THERE
CAN BE
GENTLE
PRESSURE
TO COME
BACK...

...FROM
SOME-
ONE ELSE.

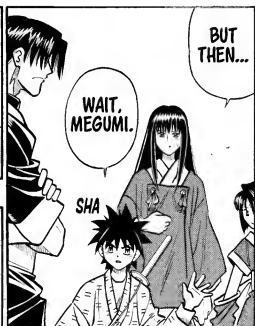
CHIRP



HOW-
EVER
...

CHIRP







I WILL
LAY A TRAP
FOR THIS
MAN.

RIGHT...WE HAVE
NO CLUES, BUT
THERE IS ONE
PERSON WHO
WILL DEFINITELY
REAPPEAR
IN TOKYO.



LET'S
START BY
GOING
THERE!

SMASH

THERE
ARE
CLUES
TO WHERE
THEY
MUST BE.

SETTING
TRAPS
IS FINE
...
...BUT
YOU CAN'T
BE SURE OF
WHEN THEY'LL
BE SPRUNG.



YOU
MEAN...

WHERE
THEY
WOULD
BE...?



YEAH!

...IS
SUPER
TOUGH!!

THE
OPPONENT
...

HEE

Rurouni Kenshin



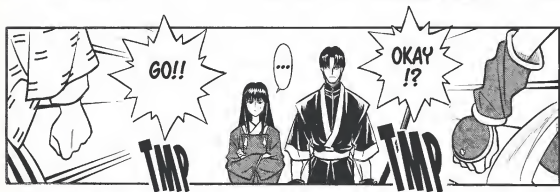
Act 213—Exchange Offer





YEAH, GETTING
IN WILL
BE EASY.

ARE YOU
SURE THIS
IS A GOOD
PLAN?

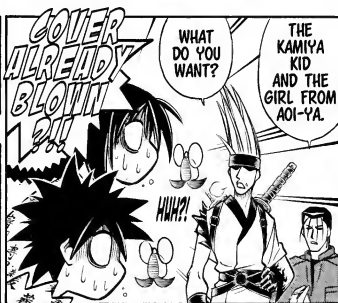






SUSHI
DELIVERY!

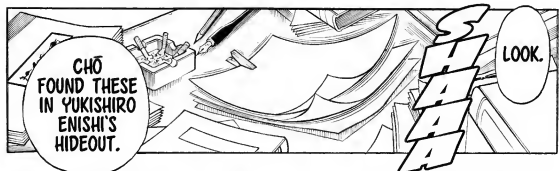
ORDER
NUMBER
TWO!

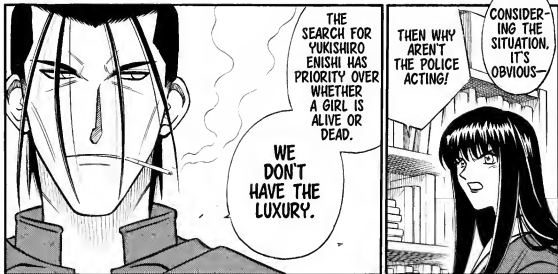


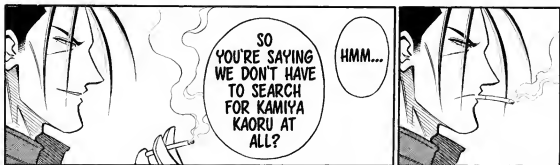
BY
FORCE
!!













WHEREVER
SHE MAY BE,
WE'LL FIND
HER ON
OUR OWN!!

YEAH.
KAORU
IS OUR
FRIEND.



SAY WHAT?
AFTER ALL
THAT, THAT'S
ALL YOU
KNOW?

MEGA

AT PRESENT,
WE DON'T
HAVE THE
EXACT
LOCATION
OF THE NEW
HIDEOUT.

KEEP
LISTENING.

I'LL
TELL YOU,
WITH THE
CONDITION
THAT YOU
STAY OUT
OF OUR
WAY.

FINE.

PLONK

IT'S TOO
OBVIOUS TO
TRANSPORT THEM
OVERLAND FROM
THE SEA OF
JAPAN TO
TOKYO...

THEY
SMUGGLE
GUNS
AND
CANNONS.

HE IS THE
HEAD OF
A BLACK
MARKET
WEAPONS
ORGANIZA-
TION.





EVEN IF THE HIDEOUT ISN'T THERE, IT IS A CONNECTION TO OUR MAIN TARGET—

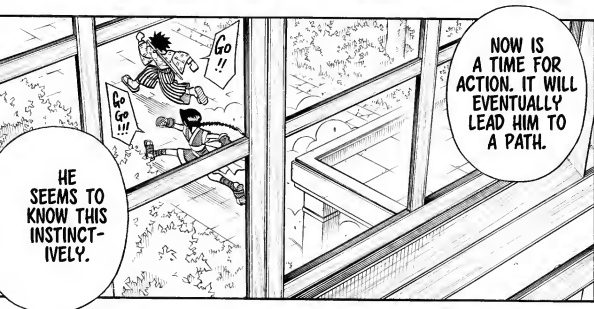
CORRECT. RE-SEARCH ...
...POINTS TO SOMEWHERE ALONG THE ARAKAWA ESTUARY.

IF THE LAND ROUTE IS DIFFICULT, THEN...THE SEA ROUTE!!

YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT NOW.

AH HA







IF HE
DIES LIKE THIS,
IT WILL BE
HIS DEFEAT.
NOTHING
MORE.

I THINK
I'VE ALREADY
TOLD THIS GUY
HERE, BUT OUR
SCORE WILL BE
SETTLED BY "WHO
SURVIVES."

I
DON'T
WANT
TO SEE
HIM.

"HEARD"?
YOU
HAVEN'T
GONE
TO SEE
HIM?



YOU
AREN'T
WOR-
RIED?!

SINCE WE'RE
ALREADY TALKING,
TELL ME ONE
MORE THING.
ARE THE POLICE
DIRECTING ALL
THEIR RESOURCES
TOWARDS FINDING
ENISHI BECAUSE
THEY ARE AFRAID
HE WILL FLEE TO
SHANGHAI?



AT SEA
HE'S STILL
ACCESSIBLE,
BUT WE
WON'T BE
ABLE TO
TOUCH
HIM IN
SHANGHAI.

IF
THAT
IS THE
CASE,
FINE.

A
DIRECT
ENCOUNTER
WOULD BE
THE BEST
WAY TO
SETTLE OUR
SCORE.



YOUR
SCORE
WON'T BE
SETTLED
UNTIL FAR
IN THE
FUTURE...

YOU
HAVE KNOWN
HIM THE
LONGEST...
YOU KNOW
THIS THE
BEST.

BATTŌSAI
IS NOT A
WEAKLING
WHO WILL
END LIKE
THIS.

THERE'S NEWS
OF HIM ARRIVING
IN TOKYO
FROM SHANGHAI.

...THE
OPPOSITE.
THE
ORGANIZATION'S
SECOND-IN-
COMMAND...

YUKISHIRO
ENISHI'S PERSONAL
JINCHŪ WAS
CUTE ENOUGH
TO IGNORE...
...BUT
ANYTHING
BEYOND THAT
WILL NOT BE
ALLOWED.

CREEEEK

IT SEEMS
THEY'RE PLANNING
TO OPEN A FULL-
BLOWN MARKET
IN TOKYO.

IN
THE LAST
BATTLE, IT
SHOWED POWERS
STRONGER THAN
THE ARMSTRONG
CANNON.

IF HE HAD
BEEN ALLOWED
TO USE IT, THE
BATTLE WOULD
HAVE BEEN AN
EXTREMELY
DIFFICULT
ONE...

THEY
ALSO HAVE
A UNIQUE WAY
OF MODIFYING
WEAPONS TO
MEET THEIR
NEEDS.

HIS
ORGANIZATION
IS STILL
YOUNG AND
THUS SMALL IN
SCALE, BUT
THEY HAVE
MOMENTUM.

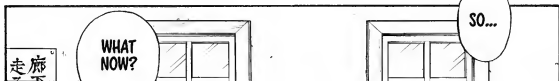
FOR
EXAMPLE, TAKE
THE WEAPON THAT
ONE-ARMED MAN
RECEIVED FROM
YUKISHIRO ENISHI.

Resource R



BAT...
TÔ...

...SAI!!



走廊

WHAT
NOW?

SO...



NO.

...AS
YAHIKO
SAID...

...YOU DON'T
KNOW WHEN
YOU'LL GET
RESULTS.



BECAUSE
OF THAT,
MY TRAP
WILL SOON
BE SPRUNG.

THERE
IS A
'REASON'
HE WILL
NOT BE
ABLE TO
WAIT.



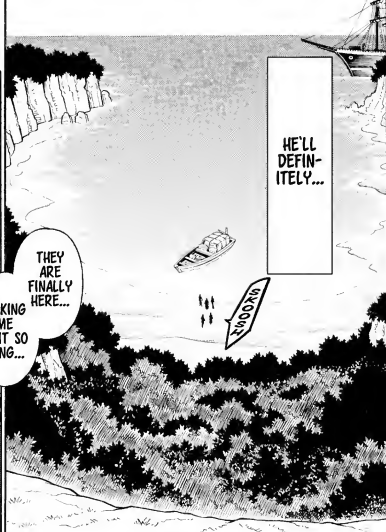
I WILL
LEAVE THE
SEARCH OF
THE ESTUARY
TO THOSE
TWO...
AND
PROCEED
WITH MY
PLAN TO
LAY A TRAP
AND WAIT.

HMM...
BUT...



MAKING
ME
WAIT SO
LONG...

THEY
ARE
FINALLY
HERE...



HE'LL
DEFIN-
ITELY...



A PRIME
CHANCE
FOR
ESCAPE!!

IT'S
HERE...

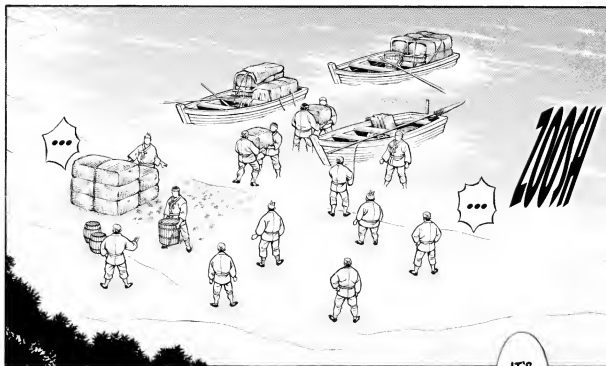
Rurouni Kenshin

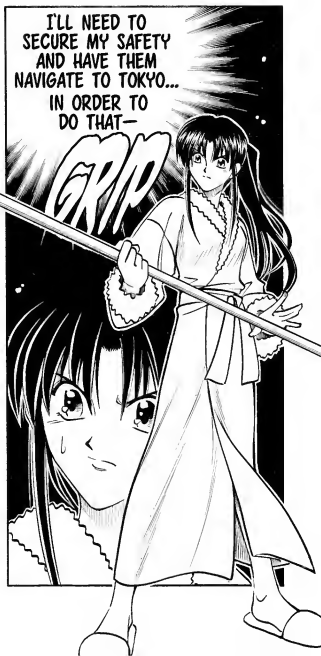




和伸
月宏

Act 214
Change in Enishi







...YOU MUST BE
THE FAMOUS
SECOND-IN-
COMMAND OF THE
ORGANIZATION.

NICE MEETING
YOU, MISTER
GEIN. I'VE HEARD
ABOUT YOU FROM
THE BOSS.

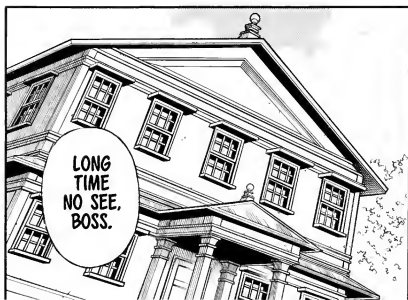


PLEASD TO
MAKE YOUR
ACQUAINTANCE.

I AM WOO
HEISHIN.









WHEN
DID YOU
ARRIVE
FROM
SHANGHAI?

HEISHIN.

...AND THE
"EXPANSION INTO
TOKYO" WAS
COMING
TO AN END.

I HEARD
THAT YOUR
"PERSONAL
BATTLE"...

JUST
THE OTHER
DAY.

...THAT YOU
HAVE NOT
FORGOTTEN YOUR
PROMISE.

I HAVE
COME TO
MAKE
SURE...

...I
WILL HAND
OVER THE
ORGANIZA-
TION
TO YOU.

I
HAVEN'T
FORGOTTEN.

AS THE
PRICE FOR
USING THE
ORGANIZATION'S
RESOURCES TO
SUPPORT MY
PERSONAL
BATTLE...

OF
COURSE,
THAT IS
EXACTLY
LIKE YOU.

YOU
ARE VERY
SUSPICIOUS.

CHA



WHEN THE
AFFAIR IS OVER,
I HAVE NO
ATTACHMENTS
OR INTEREST
IN THE
ORGANIZA-
TION.

I WANTED
THE FORCE
AND FINANCES
REQUIRED
FOR THE
JINCHŪ...
...AND THE
WEAPONS
TRADE JUST
HAPPENED
TO HAVE
BOTH.



I HAVE
A JOB
FOR YOU
ALREADY.

HOLD
ON.



I'VE ALREADY
GIVEN ORDERS
TO THE MEN
ON THE SHIP,
SO NO NEED
TO WORRY.

I FEEL SORRY
FOR HIM, HAVING
30 MARTIAL-
ART ADEPTS
LYNCHING HIM
AND THROWING
HIM INTO THE SEA.

IS IT
ABOUT
MR.
GEIN?

HEE



I AM
ALWAYS
IMPRESSED
BY YOUR
THOROUGHNESS.

IT IS THE
ONLY THING
I HAVE.
EXCUSE ME...



I'M
SOMEWHAT
RELIEVED
TO HEAR
THAT.

I WILL BE
RESIDING IN
MY PERSONAL
MANSION FOR
A WHILE...

...SO LET
ME KNOW
OF ANY
NEEDS THAT
DEVELOP.



HIS
CONCEIT
IN
THINKING
HE OWNS
US IS
ANNOYING.



NO
ATTACH-
MENTS OR
INTEREST...
EH?



HOW-
EVER...

THAT'S
FINE.



DANGER-
OUS.
VERY
DANGER-
OUS.

KACHAK

KLAN CREEK



THERE
IS ONLY
ONE
WAY...

HOW TO
SECURE MY
SAFETY AND
GET THEM TO
NAVIGATE
THE SHIP...

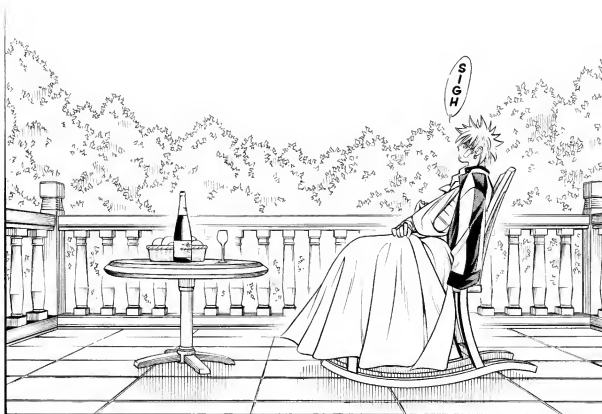


ANOTHER
SHADY
FIGURE
APPEARS.



TAKE YUKISHIRO ENISHI
HOSTAGE! MY CHANCES
OF SUCCESS AREN'T
GOOD, BUT IF I GET
HIM WHILE HE IS
RECOVERING FROM
HIS WOUNDS...

I HAVE
TO GET OUT
OF HERE
BEFORE
THINGS GET
ANY MORE
COMPLI-
CATED.



SISTER
...

...IT'S
ALMOST
OVER.

ALL I HAVE TO DO
IS TO WATCH
BATTŌSAI SLOWLY ROT
IN THE SHADOWS OF
HIS LOST WILL...

...IT IS
ALMOST
OVER...



GYAAA!

YUKI-
SHIRO
ENISHI,
TAKE—

SHA

WHY...

SISTER
...!

H
A
A

WHY
ARE YOU
WEARING THAT
EXPRESSION?
WHY AREN'T
YOU SMILING
LIKE USUAL?!

H
A
A

BECAUSE
BATTOSAI'S
"REPLACE-
MENT"
FOR YOU
IS STILL
ALIVE!!

I SEE...
IT'S
BECAUSE
SHE'S
ALIVE...!

BURR

THE JINCHŪ
WILL NOT BE
COMPLETE
WITHOUT
YOUR DEATH!

...GA...
HA...

DIE
DIE
DIE...
SQUEEZE

!!





HE SEES SOME
OF HIS SISTER.
WHO HE LOST
SO LONG AGO.
IN ALL YOUNG
WOMEN.

WHEN TOMOE-
SAN DIED...
HE WAS SO
YOUNG...THE
SHOCK THAT
TURNED HIS
HAIR WHITE
REMAINED AS
A WOUND IN
HIS SOUL.

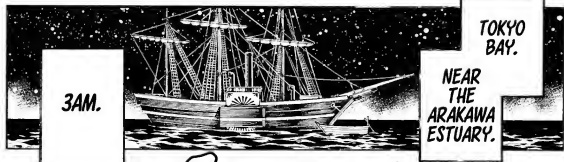
...HIS BODY
SOMEHOW
REJECTS IT.

SO EVEN
IF HIS MIND
WANTS TO
KILL...

THE
REASON WHY
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI...DIDN'T
KILL ME...

...KNOW... ...I...

HAA
HAA





...THEN
THEY
ARE DEAD
WRONG.

GETTING
RID OF ME
IMMEDIATELY
AFTER THE
JOB IS
DONE...
ENISHI
AND
HEISHIN ARE
BOTH CRUEL
PEOPLE.

BUT IF
THEY THINK
THAT I'M
WEAKER
THAN THE
DOLLS I
CONTROL...

...YOUR
ORGANIZATION.

THANKS
FOR THE
RIDE...

BUT I
NO LONGER
NEED...

Rurouni Kenshin



仲宏
和月

Act 215
**Three
Days
Later**



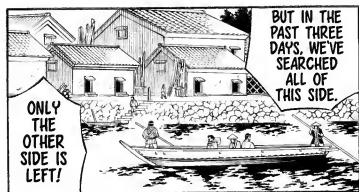
SEARCH
FOR
YUKISHIRO
ENISHI'S
HIDEOUT!

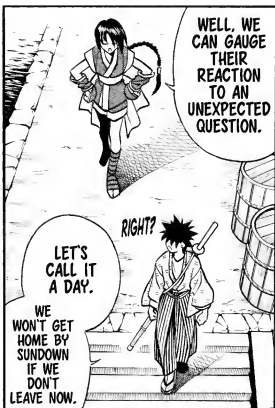
RESEARCH
POINTS TO
SOMEWHERE
ALONG THE
ARAKAWA
ESTUARY.

EVEN IF
KAORU
ISN'T
THERE...

...THERE
MUST
BE A
LEAD!

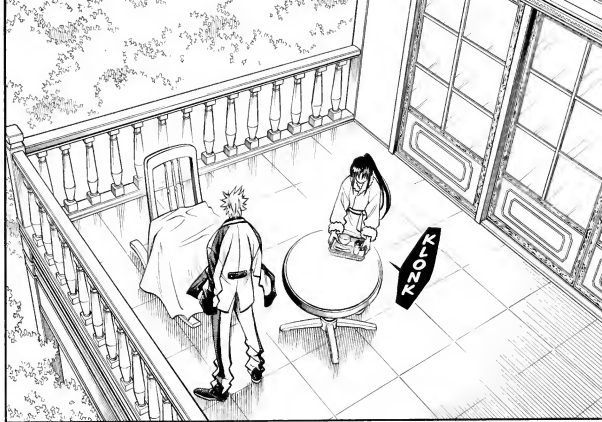
THERE
MUST!!





ZOOOSH





...WHAT'S
THE
MEANING
OF
THIS?

THERE'S NO
SIGN OF
ANYONE
BUT ME
USING THE
KITCHEN.

YOU HAVEN'T
EATEN
ANYTHING
GOOD SINCE
YOU GOT
HERE.

IT TAKES
THE SAME
EFFORT TO
MAKE FOOD
FOR TWO
PEOPLE AS
IT DOES FOR ONE.

NOTHING.

POIT LOOK.

YOU
BETTER
EAT IT.





...MY ESCAPE
MAY BE
EASIER THAN
EXPECTED.

IF I
ATTACK HIS
WEAKNESS,
HIS
WOUNDED
HEART...

I
THOUGHT
ABOUT
IT FOR
THREE
DAYS.



...LIKE THIS
METHOD...

I
DON'T...



YOU
MUST
BE
HUNGRY.





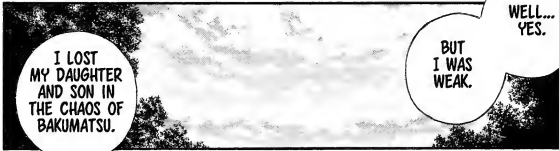
TASTES
HORRIBLE

...

...







I LOST
MY DAUGHTER
AND SON IN
THE CHAOS OF
BAKUMATSU.

BUT
I WAS
WEAK.

WELL...
YES.



YOU'VE
BEEN
CARRYING
SOME
BAGGAGE
TOO...

HMM
...



MY DAUGHTER
WAS A 100
TIMES MORE
BEAUTIFUL!

THAT'S
IMPOS-
SIBLE!



THINK OF
ME AS YOUR
DAUGHTER
FOR
TONIGHT.

OKAY!



THINGS
YOU'VE LOST
CAN MYSTERIOUSLY
REAPPEAR, BUT
THINGS THROWN
AWAY WILL NOT
MYSTERIOUSLY
COME BACK.

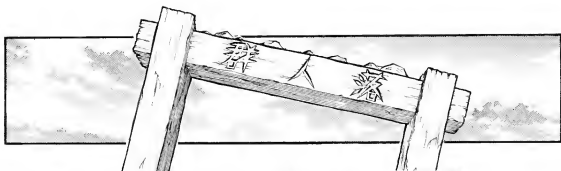
IT'S
FINE, AS
LONG AS
YOU DON'T
THROW IT
AWAY.



I DON'T
KNOW WHAT HE
LOST, BUT
HE IS ONE
STEP FROM
THROWING IT
AWAY...



BUT
IN A LONG
LIFETIME,
LOSING
SOMETHING IS
INEVITABLE.



I LIVE
FOR THE
ONCE-A-
MONTH HOT
POT!

AHH,
THIS IS
GOOD! SO
GOOD!



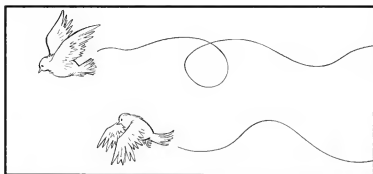
THAT SAMURAI
HASN'T EATEN
ANYTHING
SINCE HE
GOT HERE.
IS HE
GOING TO
BE OKAY?

HE'S
NOT
INTERESTED.

HOW
ABOUT
A TOAST
TO OUR
FRIEND-
SHIP?

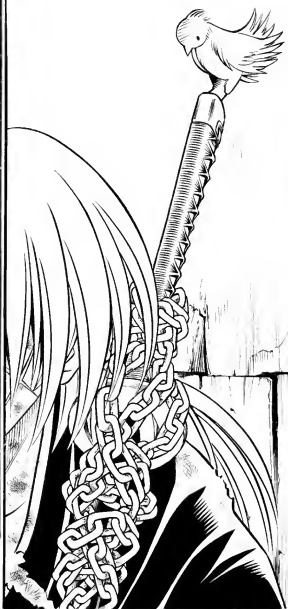
HEY,
NEW
GUY.
WANT
SOME?

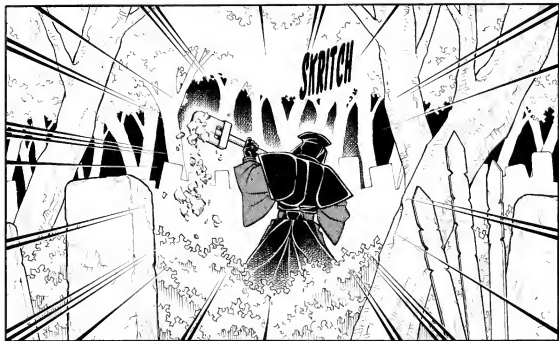
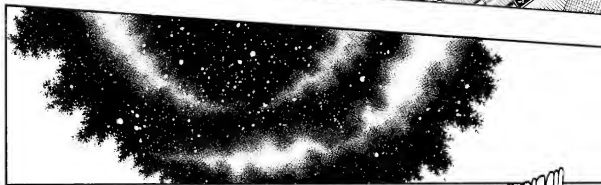


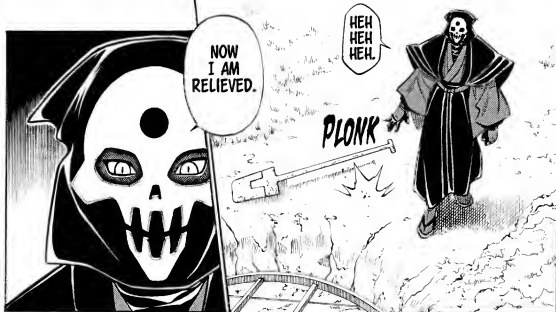




CHIRP









CONSIDERING
THE NEED TO
PRESERVE THE
IWANBO VERSION
TWO, I KNEW IT
WOULDN'T BE
TOO LONG...

I
THOUGHT
YOU'D
FROLIC BACK
HERE.

THP



WHERE
IS
KAMIYA
KAORU?

THE
HEAD OF
ONIWABANSHŪ
ONMITSU,
SHINOMORI
AOSHI...

IT IS
YOU...



ZANKŌSEN...
SEVERING
STEEL WIRES...



...MASTER-
PIECE
?!!



WHERE
DID YOU
HIDE MY...



“FREE TALK”〈PART II〉

Now for the usual stupid talk. Long time no see—this is the “tasteful” Watsuki. This is the first time the adjective “tasteful” has been used to describe me, so I’m a little startled. By the way, what does it mean to be “tasteful”?

If you don’t get the previous paragraph, just ignore it. No problem. Now, let’s go to our customary figure and game talk +α! I actually have nothing to say about figures! It’s not that the quality has dropped, or that I’ve gotten bored of them, but there hasn’t been anything that stood out for me. But I’m about to be hooked on “HG Gachapons,” which are a little different from figures. I am stopping at the *SD Gundam* for now, but how I proceed is up to the future lineup. If “Adventures of Gamba” and “Paul’s Miraele Operation” series are released, I will definitely be hooked (Gamba may happen, but Paul will never happen...). Another thing I recently like is the slightly questionable transforming robot watch, “Tokime Steamhead” (Bandai). The talking feature is so fun that I carry it around constantly.

In games, the *Samurai Spirits Asura Zanmaden* was never acquired locally... This is twice in a row. I want to play *Samu Supi*. Let me play! *The Gekka no Kenshi—Flowers Blooming By the Moon, Shedding By the Moon* was acquired, so I’ve played it a little. The tide turning sword move *chikara* (power) is fun, as usual. However, there are too many new good-looking characters. In the arcades, I have played *Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure* (Capcom) a little bit. The effects are so well done that fans of the original work will enjoy it greatly. The effects at the “Continue?” screen made me laugh out loud. Good! There are several products of interest in terms of console games, but since I don’t have any time, I’ll have to hold off on them. As I say this, *FF VIII* came out before I had a chance to play *FF VII* (both Square), making me sad.

The α refers to talking about OAVs. For Watsuki who loves *Getter*, the new *Getter Robo* series is irresistible. The story is incomprehensible, making me think, “If the great sensei, Ishikawa Ken’s taste could be expressed so well, they should have done it with the original *Getter*.” The coolness of the original *Getter* is still something to rave about. Another one I am looking forward to is *Samurai Spirits Asura Zanmaden*. Anime based on games are usually unsuccessful, so I was not anticipating it too much, but Nanase Aoi-sensei, who I admire, does the character design. Now I am greatly anticipating it. Of course, the artwork is not everything, so I ask the whole staff to work very hard, as a *Samu Supi* fan.

I usually do not watch too many OAVs—the recent trend of cute girls filling the screen is not the best for an *otaku*—but I am looking at these two releases.

Life with so many little joys gathered to fulfill my day—a life like that wouldn’t be bad, but I would still like to go on with the one big joy of writing manga fulfilling my day. With that thought, we head into the climax of the *Jinchū* episodes. See you in the next volume!



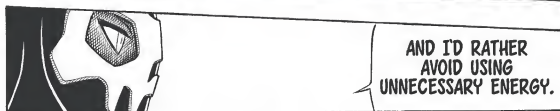
Act 216

The Two in Black (Part 1)



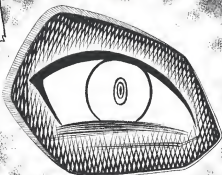
SHURU! SHURU! SHURU! SHURU!





IT
IS TOO
PERFECT
TO LET
ROT.

IT NEEDS
TO BE
RECORDED
IN OUR
DARK
HISTORY!!



THAT
IS PROOF
THAT MY
CREATION...

...IS
BEYOND
COMPARISON
!

!

I
ASKED MY
QUESTION
FIRST.

THAT
IS
NOT MY
CONCERN.

I THOUGHT
YOU WOULD
BE ABLE TO
UNDERSTAND
AT LEAST A
LITTLE OF MY
ARTISTIC SOUL.

WE BOTH
LURK IN THE
SHADOWS
WEARING
BLACK
OUTFITS.

SHEESH.



KRAK

KRIK

BUT IT
SEEMS YOU
ARE THE
SAME AS
ALL THE
OTHERS.

SIGH

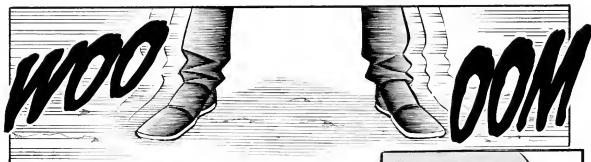
WHERE
IS...

...KAMIYA
KAORU?

SHINOMORI
AOSHI!!

PREPARE
TO BE
RETIRED...





WAAAA





YOU DIDN'T
WANT TO USE
UNNECESSARY
ENERGY,
RIGHT?

YOU
CANNOT
SLICE
OR BIND
WATER...

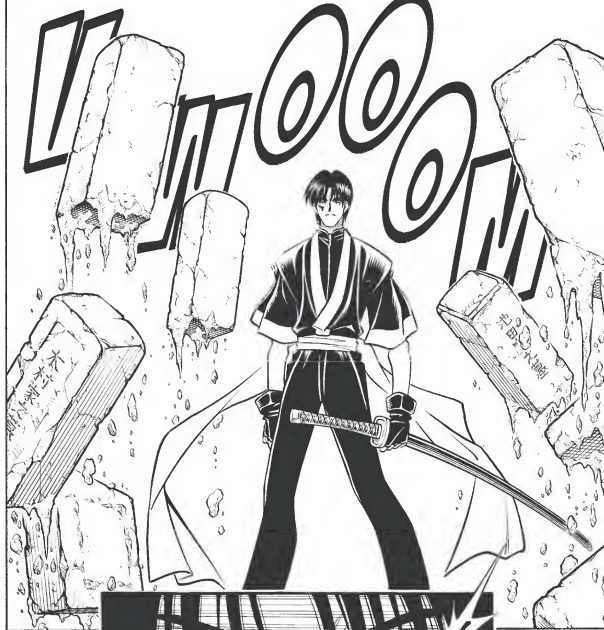
...LIKE A
CURRENT
OF
WATER...

IS
IT...?

HA HA, SARCASM
WITH A
STRAIGHT FACE...

NOW!!







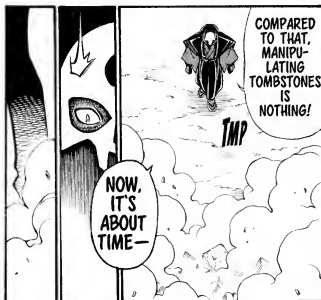


A
NORMAL
PERSON
COULDN'T
DO IT.

EVEN WITH
THE KARAKURI,
IWANBŌ TAKES
GREAT
POWER.

ENISHI, HEISHIN,
AND EVEN YOU
HAVE ALL
UNDERESTIMATED
THE POWERS OF
A DARK PUPPET
MASTER!

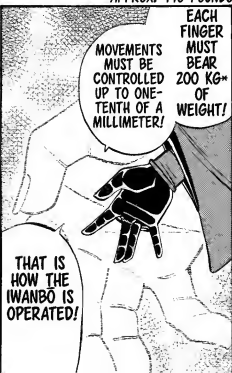
*APPROX. 440 POUNDS



NOW,
IT'S
ABOUT
TIME—

COMPARED
TO THAT,
MANIPU-
LATING
TOMBSTONES
IS
NOTHING!

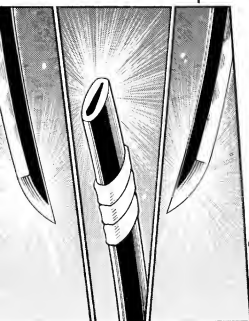
TMP



MOVEMENTS
MUST BE
CONTROLLED
UP TO ONE-
TENTH OF A
MILLIMETER!

EACH
FINGER
MUST
BEAR
200 KG*
OF
WEIGHT!

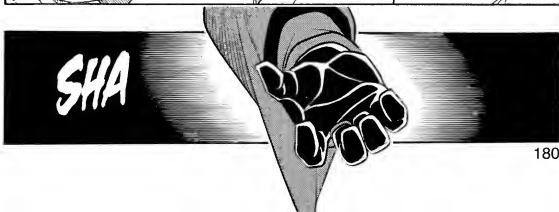
THAT IS
HOW THE
IWANBŌ IS
OPERATED!

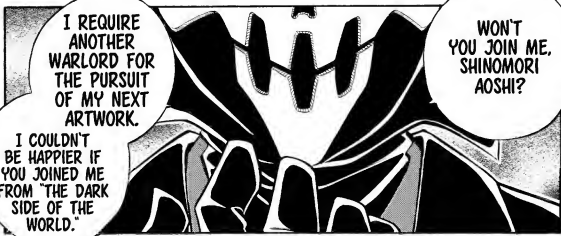


"IT'S
ABOUT
TIME" FOR
WHAT?

ANSWERING
MY
QUESTION?







I REQUIRE
ANOTHER
WARLORD FOR
THE PURSUIT
OF MY NEXT
ARTWORK.

I COULDN'T
BE HAPPIER IF
YOU JOINED ME
FROM "THE DARK
SIDE OF THE
WORLD."

WON'T
YOU JOIN ME,
SHINOMORI
AOSHI?



BUT THAT
WILL ALSO
BE FAR IN
THE FUTURE.



WITH THIS
NEW ERA, THE
SHADOW ARTS
SHOULD
DISAPPEAR
WITHOUT THE
PUBLIC EVER
KNOWING OF
THEM.

THERE ARE
SOME WHO USE
THOSE SKILLS
FOR THEIR OWN
AMBITIONS,
CREATING
PROBLEMS FOR
THE PEOPLE OF
THE WORLD.



SUCH
VILLAINS
WILL BE
SENT TO THE
DEEPEST PIT
BY THOSE
SAME DARK
POWERS.

UNFORTUN-
ATELY...

...BEING
THE MASTER
OF A SMALL
INN...

...ISN'T
BAD.

THIS
IS MY
DUTY...

...AS
THE LAST
MASTER OF
ONIWABANSHŪ
ONMITSU.

FSHA

FINE!

BUT
WHOEVER
TRIES TO
INTERFERE
IN MY
PURSUIT OF
"BEAUTY"...

...WILL BE
ELIMINATED
!!

IS THIS
THE ANSWER
YOU GOT
FROM YOUR
MEDITATIONS
IN KYOTO?

ALTHOUGH
WE ARE BOTH
ROGUES WHO
WEAR BLACK,
WE ARE
COMPLETELY
DIFFERENT
ENTITIES.



GOKŌ JŪJI
(CURVED-
BLADE
X-CROSS)
!!!

呉鉤
ここう

十字
じゅうじ



ONIWABAN STYLE
KODACHI NITŌ-RYŪ!

御庭番式
おにわばんしき
小太刀二刀流
こだちにとうりゅう



HOW
CLEVER
!



PUPPETRY
IS
ORDINARILY
PERFORMED
USING BOTH
HANDS.

HERE IS
ANOTHER
USE FOR
THE
WIRES...

THIS
IS THE
BEGINNING...

CHAK

...OF
A TRUE
FIGHT OF
DARKNESS!

YES...THIS
IS THE
BEGINNING...

The Secret Life of Characters (47)

—Gein—

The origin of this character, as many may have guessed from the name, is the serial killer who made lampshades and chairs out of corpses, Edgar Gein. Combining the puppet master required by the story with this model resulted in Gein.

He may have been one of the most popular of the six *Jinchū* comrades, since I got a lot of hooing when I showed his face (laugh). I had thought of him as a cunning old man, with many years of experience. It was the same with Han'nya, but it seems many readers assume that masked characters need to be good-looking. Watsuki thinks, "Why would a good-looking person wear a mask?" But when I think about it more, I don't know which part of the audience I appealed to when I made him an old man, so I regret not having more foresight. Being "disappointed with the real face" is not an efficient use of the mask. I wanted to challenge a good-looking masked character like Char from *Gundam*. And Gein's obsession with functional beauty and physical beauty come directly from Watsuki's obsession with them.

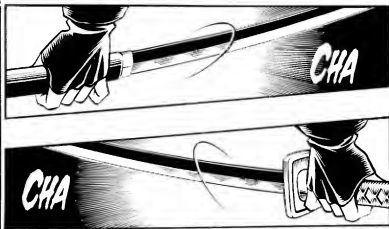
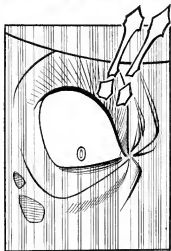
There are no real models in terms of physical design. With the concept of him as a puppet master, the silhouette on the cover illustration of volume 13 made him look too much like a ninja from another manga, so that was rejected (the cover of volume 13 is a second version which has been edited for the comics). The costume for a "puppet master" from the "kuroko" (background actors/stage crew who appear on stage) mask and black outfit and the skull mark on the mask from his "necromancer" image were all mixed up to form the final design.

Unlike the rest of the characters, Gein's outfit has the minimum amount of highlights, as an experiment for the next work, which will have fewer highlights. They eat up a lot of time in *Ruro-Ken*. The result was better than I had hoped for, and so in that sense this design is already a successful one.



Act 217—The Two in Black (Part 2)





奥義

SECRET

ONIWABAN STYLE
KODACHI NITO-RYU!

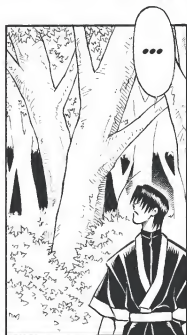
御庭番式
小太刀三刀流

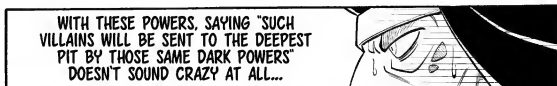
SPIRAL SWORD
DANCE SIX
SUCCESIONS!!

剣
舞
六
連

回
天

!!









IT
SEEMS
USELESS
TO
STRUGGLE
ANY
FURTHER.

HEH
HEH...

HUFF

HUFF



ARE YOU
THROUGH
PLAYING
TAG?



...I HAVE A
DEAL FOR
YOU.

HOWEVER, I
DO NOT WISH
TO GIVE UP
THE CORPSE
DOLL.
SO...



HOW
ABOUT
IT?



BUT YOU MUST
TELL ME,
HONESTLY,
WHERE YOU
PUT MY
DOLL.

I WILL
TELL YOU
KAMIYA
KAORU'S
LOCATION
...

SHA



...



SHINO-
MORI
AOSHI!!

YOU
FELL
FOR IT!

BWAAA

Bloo

Bloo

幾何
八方陣
!!!

OCTAGONAL
GEOMETRY
!!!



外法操系術

ROGUE
WEAVING
ART-

YOU
WON'T BE
ABLE TO
LIE, IF
YOUR LIFE
DEPENDS
ON IT!

AND...THIS
IS THE
FINISHING
TOUCH...

THESE
WIRES ARE
SOAKED IN
HIGH-GRADE
OIL, SO EVEN
A SMALL
SPARK WILL
MAKE THEM
INSTANTLY
COMBUST.

NOW
ANSWER.
WHERE
DID YOU
HIDE MY
CORPSE
DOLL?!

EVEN
YOU
CAN'T
STRIKE
AT ME
IN ONE
LEAP.

I'VE
TAKEN
AWAY
YOUR
MOBILITY.

WA
O O O

I CREMATED
THEM AND
LAID THEM TO
REST SO THAT
THIS WILL
NEVER HAPPEN
AGAIN.

I FELT
SORRY FOR
THE CORPSES
THAT WERE
VIOLATED
BY ROGUES,
ASSAULTED
EVEN AFTER
DEATH.

I
BURNED
IT.



撥

はつ

陰

おにわばんしき
御庭番式
こだち にとうりゅう
小太刀二刀流
おん

止

し

陽

みよう

ONMYO-HASSHI (DUSK TO DAWN STRIKE)!

ONIWABAN STYLE KODACHI NITO-RYU!



...YOU
LEFT
BEHIND
THE WIRES
YOU
BOASTED
SO MUCH
ABOUT.



I'LL
USE THEM
SO THEY
DON'T
GO TO
WASTE.



A
FUTILE
EFFORT.

DIE
WITH
DIGNITY,
FOOL...

READ
THIS
WAY

I REFUSE...DUTY
IS OF THE
HIGHEST PRIORITY
FOR THE
ONIWABANSHŪ.
AND JUST AS I
HAVE SAID...

JUST
WAIT!

I'LL
FORGET
ABOUT
THE
CORPSE
DOLL!!

I'LL
BREAK
THE
WEAVE!

WAIT...
OKAY,
HOLD
ON!

SHA

THIS IS
MY DUTY
AS THE LAST
MASTER OF
ONIWABANSHŪ
ONMITSU!!

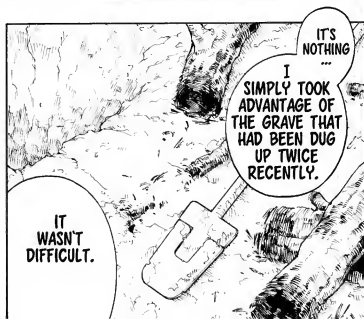
...SUCH VILLAINS
WILL BE SENT
TO THE DEEPEST
PIT BY THOSE
SAME DARK
POWERS...

$$G_{\frac{1}{2}}$$

A
A
A
A
A
A
A
.....!

CHIRP
CHIRP







BESIDES...



I STILL
HAVE MY
DUTY.

OF
COURSE
NOT.

YOU DIDN'T
FEEL LIKE
LEAVING WITH
THE BLACK
SKELETON
MAN.

PASH
PASH

THERE ARE
THOSE WHO
AWAIT MY
RETURN.



THIS
GIRL
IS SO
CARE-
FREE...

GRIN

EE
HEE
HEE
HEE!

AOSHI-
SAMA...



GLOSSARY of the RESTORATION

A brief guide to select Japanese terms used in *Rurouni Kenshin*. Note that, both here and within the story itself, all names are Japanese style—i.e., last or “family” name first, with personal or “given” name following. This is both because *Kenshin* is a “period” story, as well as to decrease confusion—if we were to take the example of *Kenshin*’s *sakabatô* and “reverse” the format of the historically established assassin-name “*Hitokiri Battô sai*,” for example, it would make little sense to then call him “*Battô sai Himura*.”

hakubaikô

The fragrance of white plum blossoms

Himura Kenshin

Kenshin’s “real” name, revealed to Kaoru only at her urging

Hiten Mitsurugi-ryû

Kenshin’s sword technique, used more for defense than offense. An “ancient style that pits one against many,” it requires exceptional speed and agility to master.

hitokiri

An assassin. Famous swordsmen of the period were sometimes thus known to adopt “professional” names—*Kawakami Gensai*, for example, was also known as “Hitokiri Gensai.”

Edgar Gein

Famous serial killer known for bizarre crimes that involved the desecration of dozens of graves

Ishin Shishi

Loyalist or pro-Imperialist *patriots* who fought to restore the Emperor to his ancient seat of power

Kawakami Gensai

Real-life, historical inspiration for the character of *Himura Kenshin*

Amakakeru Ryû no Hirameki

Lit., “Heavens-Bridging Dragon Spark” (as in spark of “inspiration,” not “fire” or “flame”). Final or “succession” move of *Hiten Mitsurugi-ryû*, it incorporates everything Kenshin has been taught so far—including the overriding will to *live*. Also known as “Dragon Flight of Heaven.”

Bakumatsu

Final, chaotic days of the Tokugawa regime

-chan

Honorific. Can be used either as a diminutive (e.g., with a small child—“Little Hanako or Kentarô”), or with those who are grown, to indicate affection (“My dear...”).

-dono

Honorific. Even more respectful than **-san**; the effect in modern-day Japanese conversation would be along the lines of “Milord So-and-So.” As used by Kenshin, it indicates both respect and humility.

Edo

Capital city of the *Tokugawa Bakufu*; renamed *Tokyo* (“Eastern Capital”) after the Meiji Restoration

patriots

Another term for *Ishin Shishi*...and, when used by Sano, not a flattering one

rurouni

Wanderer, vagabond

sakabatô

Reversed-edge sword (the dull edge on the side the sharp should be, and vice versa); carried by Kenshin as a symbol of his resolution never to kill again

-sama

Honorific. The respectful equivalent of **-san**, **-sama** is used primarily in addressing persons of much higher rank than one's self...or, in a romantic sense, in addressing those upon whom one is crushing, wicked hard.

-san

Honorific. Carries the meaning of "Mr.," "Ms.," "Miss," etc., but used more extensively in Japanese than its English equivalent (note that even an enemy may be addressed as **"-san"**).

shôgun

Feudal military ruler of Japan

shôgunate

See *Tokugawa Bakufu*

Tokugawa Bakufu

Military feudal government which dominated Japan from 1603 to 1867

Tokyo

The renaming of **"Edo"** to **"Tokyo"** is a marker of the start of the *Meiji Restoration*

karakuri

Intricately constructed mechanized dolls or automatons, *karakuri* were in many ways the predecessors of Japan's modern mechanical robots and devices

-kun

Honorific. Used in the modern day among male students, or those who grew up together, but another usage—the one you're more likely to find in *Rurouni Kenshin*—is the "superior-to-inferior" form, intended as a way to emphasize a difference in status or rank, as well as to indicate familiarity or affection.

Kyoto

Home of the Emperor and imperial court from A.D. 794 until shortly after the *Meiji Restoration* in 1868

loyalists

Those who supported the return of the Emperor to power; *Ishin Shishi*

Meiji Restoration

1853-1868; culminated in the collapse of the *Tokugawa Bakufu* and the restoration of imperial rule. So called after Emperor Meiji, whose chosen name was written with the characters for "culture and enlightenment."

Okashira

Literally, "the head"; i.e. leaders, boss

onmitsu

Spies. Also known as *shinobi* or *ninja*.